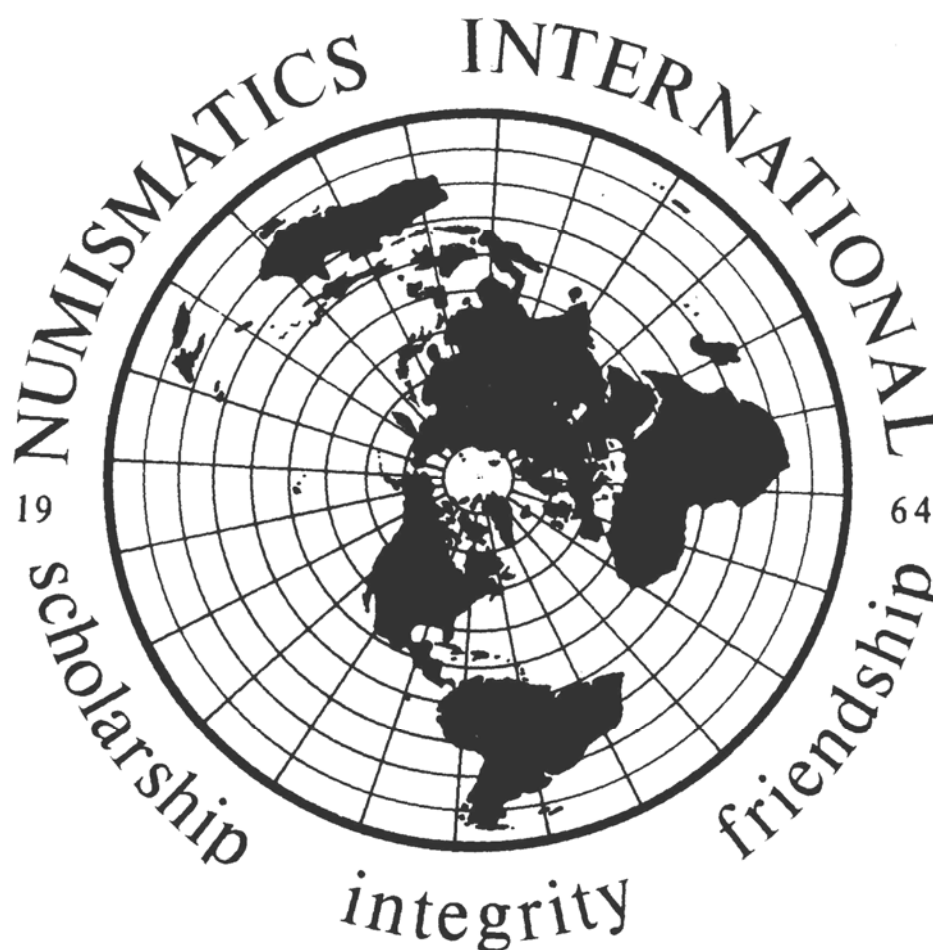


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Numismatics International is a non-profit educational organization. Its Objectives are: to encourage and promote the science of numismatics by specializing in areas and nations other than the United States of America; to cultivate fraternal relations among collectors and numismatic students; to encourage and assist new collectors; to foster the interest of youth in numismatics; to stimulate and advance affiliations among collectors and kindred organizations; and to acquire, share, and disseminate knowledge.

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We have some interesting articles in this edition including some short articles from auction houses listing some unique or otherwise interesting coins and medals. We have two fine articles from Robert Ronus dealing with European coinage. Gregory Brunk continues his Political Countermark series with the second part of "Pieces Ridiculing Napoleon III." Dr. Philip offers another interesting article, this time on some little noticed Indian coins. Dr Ford has an article on Bolivian currency with focus on the political aspect of the matter. Daniel Sedwick makes his debut in the bulletin with the first of what I hope will be many contributions; this one on how cob planchets were made. Finally, your editor has an article on the St Helena medal. I hope you enjoy this edition of your bulletin.

Herman Blanton

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It is with pleasure that I announce the winning articles for the 2010 Editor's Choice Awards.



The Bru Sale

I awarded Special Recognition to member Robert Ronus for his faithful and precise translation of Elsen's article. This was a tedious and laborious task considering the numerous citations. Robert consulted the author many times to clarify points and then

worked with me during the editing process making suggestions including the adding of more illustrations. Without Robert's generous support of time and talent the bulletin would not have been able to publish this award winning article.

I awarded a second Special Recognition award this year. Alan Luedeking wrote a history of NI which was published in the previous edition, Nov/Dev 2010. Alan's "Numismatics International as Seen Through the NI Bulletin" is truly a gem for the magazine. I placed it in the November / December edition as a special holiday treat to the membership. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

I encourage all of the membership to support NI by telling your friends about us and giving them an application form. You can get the form by writing NI at the Dallas address, or print it from the NI website *www.numis.org*. You can even apply on-line at the website. I need more articles for the magazine, especially short articles (500 words or less). As you can see above, even 122 words can win an award.

Herman Blanton, editor



Membership Report

The following person has applied for membership. Unless objections in writing are received by March 1, 2011 the membership is effective that day.

2735 Stan Dilcher, 117 Holt Rd, Marietta, GA 30068. Spanish Colonial Cobs



Library Report

The NI Library has received the following works which may be of interest to those members with an interest in the Royal Mint.

JB60.Hoc.1870.REM

Report of the Deputy Master of the Mint on European mints. 1870. 50 pp.

JB60.Hoc.1852.CPSRM

Copy of any reports to show the changes that have been made in the management of the Royal Mint and its present state. 1852. 55 pp.

These and other items in the NI Library are available for loan to any NI member. Visit the NI web site to search the NI Library catalog or mail or email the NI Librarian with your request and I will tell you if the item you need is in the NI Library.

David Gracey,
NI Librarian



Letter to the Editor

In the (July/August 2010) NI Bulletin, you published a very nice and extremely detailed article on the "The monetary Operations of the Dutch East Indies Company in the Seventeenth Century." Certain info is based (no-doubt as there is no better) on the book of C. Scholten. Over the years research has not been idle and new information has been found in the secret reports of the Audit Office of the States of Zeeland. This research was done by Mr. C. Klaassen, honorary conservator of the Royal Zeeland Society in Middelburg. He submitted a paper for a contest on the occasion of the centenary of the Royal Dutch Numismatic Society in 1992. However another paper won the contest and was published in the annual Yearbook of the Society. Klaassen's paper remained unpublished, but a synopsis of the part dealing with the United Zeeland Company was, with his approval, published in the *Encyclopaedia of Coins and Banknotes*.

I have attached a note of it. To keep the record up-to-date it may be worth to be published in one of the forthcoming issues of the Bulletin.

With kind regards,
Jan Lingen

Middelburg: United Zeeland Company

A part of the article of "The Monetary Operations of the Dutch East Indies Company in the Seventeenth Century" in NI-Bulletin, vol. 45 (nos. 7/8) describes the minting of AR 8 reales for the United Zeeland Company at Middelburg. The information used for it is based on the book of C. Scholten, *De munten van de Nederlandsche gebiedsdeelen overzee* (Amsterdam, 1951). More recent archival research has revealed a different picture regarding the minting of these 8-real pieces.

The initial request by the De Moucheron to the mint-master of Zeeland was for striking 1200 marks of silver into Spanish eight-reales. The mint-master Melchior Wijntjes (1601-1612) would agree, provided the States of Zeeland also approved. The States of Zeeland agreed, on condition that a part of the coinage should consist of coins with the Coat of Arms of the province of Zeeland to make Zeeland also known in the overseas countries. The balance would be identical to the Spanish eight-real, however, on request of the city of Goes a secret mark had to be added. Unfortunately, as we don't know the additional secret mark, no Spanish real so far has been recognized as being struck for the United Zeeland Company.

Despite that in the East the Spanish real was more in demand than other foreign coins, they agreed with the conditions stipulated by the States of Zeeland and according to the secret accounts of the audit office of the States of Zeeland, between 15 January and 16 February 1602, ca. 2557 mark of silver was coined into pieces of 8 real.

As the fleet of the Moucheron had set sail already in May 1601, no reference to the Moucheron is found in later correspondence, but only of "*Requeste van de*

Negocianten op Oost Indien” (Request of the traders with East India) which refers to the United Zeeland Company, therefore the principal for the emission of the pieces of 8 real.

On the occasion of the ‘*Muntbus*’ (A heavily armored locked wooden chest in which specimens of the freshly minted coins had to be deposited for later control of the weight and fineness by an independent commission) opening, it was found that it contained 3 specimens with the Coat of Arms of Zeeland and 83 specimen with the inscription and Coat of Arms of Spain. In total 22956 pieces of 27.42 g and a fineness of 11 *penningen* = 0.917 were struck. In proportion to the coins in contained the ‘*Muntbus*,’ about 800 pieces of 8 real with the Coat of Arms of Zeeland and the balance in Spanish type eight-real pieces. This was an early act of counterfeiting, which no-doubt needed to be kept secret, even by the audit office of the States of Zeeland.

The mintage of the provincial type of the eight real would not be 10800 as recorded by Scholten, but only about 800. The balance of well over 22000 pieces were struck with the inscription and Coat of Arms of Spain. None of them, unfortunately, has ever been recognized as such.

Ref.: *Encyclopedie van Munten en Bankbiljetten* (Encyclopaedia of Coins and Banknotes), p. V-34, 35.

NI

Quiz



Who is this woman? Shown here at a tender age she lived a full life and is the most illustrious woman of the Italian Renaissance. She posed for Leonardo de Vinci and Titian; a patron of the arts she ordered projects from artists including Andrea Mantenga. A lover of art she collected manuscripts, books, paintings, statues and to the delight of numismatists she collected Roman coins. In politics she maneuvered the likes of Caesar Borgia, Louis XII, Francis I and Charles V in order protect Mantua. In 1527 she was living in Rome and sheltered 2000 residents during the *sac of Rome* by the armies of Charles V.

For those who appreciate the art of the Renaissance medal she ordered bronze medals of herself from Gian Cristoforo Romano. One specimen was made in gold and framed with precious stones to spell her name. Today this unique masterpiece resides in the KHM in Vienna. If any medals are “priceless,” it is this one.

Answer elsewhere in this edition.

NI

Rottweil: A Lost Member of the Swiss Confederation

Robert Ronus, NI #LM139

Switzerland is one of the most decentralized countries in the world. Citizens pay more tax to their canton (or state) than to the Federal government in Berne (Bern). The reason is history. Representatives of the three original cantons, Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden met in the Grütli (Rütli) field by Lake Lucerne to swear an alliance against their Habsburg overlords. William Tell is supposed to have been part of this original group, after shooting the apple off his son's head, but there is no reference to him in contemporary documents, and sadly he appears to have been invented in the 15th century, based on a Scandinavian legend. Nevertheless, even without Tell's help, the original cantons successfully resisted the Habsburg forces and in time more and more towns and districts joined the alliance and became cantons of the Swiss Confederation. The last to join was Geneva in 1815 (although in 1978 the French-speaking Jura became the 23rd canton, separating itself from mainly German-speaking Berne). The cantons governed themselves and ceded few powers to the Federal government until the modern Constitution of 1848. Until then, to the joy of numismatists, each canton issued its own coinage.

The cantonal coinage is well documented. What is less known is that some other towns were what is called '*Zugewandte Orte*' (associated places) or towns closely connected to the Swiss Confederation by alliance treaties with some or all of the cantons, although in the end only a few became full members. One example is Rottweil, best known today as the original source of Rottweiler dogs.



Rottweil memorial in Rottweil Germany

Rottweil is one of the oldest towns in the German state of Baden-Württemberg, 105 miles by road from the major Swiss city of Basel. In 1463 Rottweil became an associated state of the Swiss Confederation.

I was therefore very interested to see a very Swiss-style medallic Taler attributed to Rottweil on offer in the *September 2009 Westfälische Auktionsgesellschaft* (or WAG, if you are allergic to German compound nouns) sale (Lot 1490). Apparently Rottweil took its membership seriously enough to issue this wonderful medallic Taler commemorating the swearing of the oath on the Grütli field which was the start of the Confederation. By this time (the middle of the 16th century) William Tell had gotten into the picture and is shown as the representative of Uri.



The obverse shows three armed men clasp hands as they swear the oath. The outer legend reads: “+ WILHELM TELL VON VRE. STOVFFACHER VON SCHWYTZ. ERNI VON VNDERWALD.” (William Tell of Uri, Stouffacher of Schwyz, Erni of Unterwalden). The inner legend reads: “+ANFANG • DESS PVNTZ • IM IAR • CHRISTI • 1296 •” (Beginning of the Confederation in the year of Christ 1296.) In exergue: between rosettes IS (= Jakob Stampfer, the famous Zürich engraver and medallist).

The reverse features an outer circle of the arms of the 13 cantons that made up the Swiss Confederation at the time and under each one a number representing its rank within the Confederation, starting with Zürich with a 1 underneath (it is still Switzerland's biggest city, even if Berne is the political capital), and going clockwise, Berne (2), Uri (4), Unterwalden (6), Glarus (8), Freiburg (10), Appenzell (12), Schaffhausen (13), Solothurn (11), Basel (9), Zug (7), Schwyz (5), and Lucerne (3). The inner circle of arms, with a Swiss cross at the center, consists of the arms of the seven other associated towns affiliated to the Confederation: clockwise, Rottweil (the eagle arms), *Gotteshausbund* (League of God's House, an independent federation of districts in what is now the canton of the Grisons or *Graubünden*), the Imperial Abbey of St. Gallen and the imperial city of St. Gallen (today together in the canton of St. Gallen), *Sieben Zehnten* (the Seven Tenths, an independent federation in what later became the canton of Valais), the imperial city of Mulhouse, and the city of Biel (today part of the canton of Berne).

Rottweil concluded its first treaty of military cooperation with the Swiss cantons in 1463. From 1519-1632 it had a full treaty of association with all 13 cantons making up the Confederation at the time. In 1632 the treaty was renewed with Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Solothurn and Fribourg. However, Rottweil never became a full member of the Confederation and when Napoleon conquered the region

in 1803 and started redrawing the map of Europe, the links with Switzerland were broken for ever.

The obverse of this medallic taler is interesting. The Grütli Pact of 1291 did not have any individual signatures. However, Schwyz and Unterwalden were traditionally thought to have been represented by Werner Stauffacher and Arnold von Melchtal respectively, the Stauffacher and Erni names on the coin. However, Walter Fürst, traditionally supposed to have represented Uri, has been replaced by the mythical Tell. Tell's name first appears in the White Book, a collection of stories composed about 1470, 179 years after the Grütli Pact. As mentioned earlier, the story is apparently an adaptation of a Scandinavian legend. However, it was obviously considered the gospel truth in Rottweil when this Taler was issued in the middle of the 16th century.

Another interesting feature on the obverse is that the date of the Grütli Pact is given as 1296, not 1291, the date proclaimed today in National Day celebrations on August 1. In fact the treaty of alliance between the three cantons in 1291 is, as mentioned, unsigned and is one of a number of such mutual defense and assistance pacts. The text of the 1291 treaty refers to renewing "the terms of the act of ancient alliance," although no such earlier document has been found. There was a later treaty between the same three cantons in 1315, the Pact of Brunnen. There is no firm evidence as to which of these pacts, if any, were the occasion of the Grütli oath and a variety of dates have been suggested at different times. One Rudolf (not Werner) Stauffer of Schwyz was named as being present at the signing of another alliance between Zurich, Uri and Schwyz on October 16, 1291. Apparently 1296 was favored by the designer of this coin in the 16th century. Finally, in 1891, when Berne, the Swiss capital, was celebrating its 700th anniversary, the Government published an official version of the 1291 pact, associating it with the Grütli oath. 1291 has been Switzerland's birthday ever since.

But was it struck in Rottweil?

Apart from the Rottweil arms along with all the others, there is no reference to Rottweil. It is true that Stampfer, the Zürich die-cutter, also executed commissions from cities in South Germany. Nau, in her authoritative work on the coinage of the cities of Upper Swabia, lists it under Rottweil. However, the classic Swiss numismatists, such as von Haller and Wunderly, consider it a Swiss '*Bundestaler*' and list it with other Swiss medallic Talers issued on patriotic occasions. In the catalogue of the massive European collection of the German knight von Schulthess-Rechberg, the coin is listed under Switzerland. It appears to me that there is no evidence at all, either from the coin or documentation, to suggest that it was struck or issued in Rottweil. It was almost certainly struck and issued in Zürich. However, perhaps the Rottweil arms are reason enough to include it in a collection of Rottweil coins, as palpable evidence of Rottweil's Swiss connection long ago.

The Taler has a weight of 28.41 g and a diameter of 44 mm.

References are Nau 37, Habich 870, Haller 27, Sammlung Wunderly 3414, Schulthess-Rechberg 6135 and Sammlung Wurster 1777.

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NI

Gold Medal of Charles V, HRE (Charles I of Spain) Aureo y Calicó



Charles I. Obv.: "IMPER : SEMPER • AVGVS : CAROL : V • ROMA" laurelled bust right, with armor and golden fleece. Rev.: "PLVS VLTRA" imperial crown over double eagle that separates the Columns of Hercules. Gold, 27 mm, cast. Even though it is clear that it has been cast from a period medal, we can not find the original type in any catalog. Two small casting holes. (Aureo y Calicó, Subasta 15-December-2010, lot 1000.)

NI



Quiz answer: The subject of this edition's quiz is none other than Isabella d'Este.

NI

Italian Mints Can Take a Casual Attitude Towards Dates

Robert Ronus, NI #LM139

The stereotypical Italian is fun-loving and creative, with, unlike the stereotypical German, little interest in details. Certainly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries some Italian mints had a very casual attitude to dates on their coins.

Alessandro Farnese ruled as Duke of Parma from 1586-1592. I was therefore surprised to come across a half scudo with the date of 1574 on the reverse (CNI IX, p. 465, 24 (Plate XXX, 7), Morosini 13).



Figure 1

Obv.: "ALEXANDER • FARN • DVX • III •" bust right with lis below neck.

Rev.: "ISTIS 1574 DVCIBVS" (under these leaders). The Three Graces standing.

The answer to the problem was that the Parma mint struck coins for Alessandro Farnese with his bust and title on the obverse but using a reverse die from the time of his predecessor, Ottavio Farnese (1547-1586), which was dated 1574. Here is a description of the Ottavio Farnese coin (CNI IX, p. 445, 77, Moro. 2.)



Figure 2

Obv.: "OCTAVIVS FAR PAR ET PLA DVX • II •" bust left.

Rev.: "ISTIS 1574 DVCIBVS" the Three Graces standing.

The photos in figures 1 & 2 show the different obverses and the nearly identical reverses of the two coins.

The dates on the corresponding scudi are even more confusing. The Ottavio Farnese 1574 scudo (Davenport 8342) has the same obverse and reverse as the half scudo. However, while the Alessandro Farnese scudo (Dav. 8345) has the same Three Graces reverse with the 1574 date, the obverse is dated 1588, see figure 3.



Figure 3

Obv.: “• ALEXANDER • FARN • DVX • III •” bust right, 1588 below neck.
(Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG, Auction 35, lot 349)

There is apparently also a half scudo with this obverse and the two dates (CNI IX, p. 463, 14/15).

I have not found any explanation as to why the Parma mint was using a 1574 die in 1588, two years after Alessandro had succeeded to the duchy. In the same year the mint master Lelio Scajoli produced a ducatone, Figure 4 (Dav. 8344), a double ducatone (Dav. 8343) and a half ducatone (Moro. 12, CNI IX, p. 463, 10/11, in CNI called for some reason a half scudo although it is a larger coin). These had a new bust facing left on the obverse and a totally different reverse.



Figure 4

(Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG, Auction 30, lot 915)

Obv.: “▼ALEXANDER ▼ FARN ▼ DVX ▼ III ▼” bust left with high collar,
below 1588.

Rev.: “PARMAE / PLAC ▼ ETC” (of Parma, Piacenza and other places), crown over a shield with the arms of Austria, Burgundy and the papacy. “PS” below.

Perhaps these new dies were not yet ready when they struck the Three Graces issues.

Parma was not alone in issuing coins with different dates on the obverse and reverse. Here is a picture of a piastre of Ferdinando II of Tuscany (1621-1670), minted in Florence, see figure 5.



Figure 5

Obv.: “• FERD • II • MAGN • DVX • ETRVRI •” bust with moustache right,
“•1638•” below.

Rev.: “• S • IOANNES • / • BAPTISTA •” St. John the Baptist standing, “1635”
below.

References are Davenport 4202, Morosini 4 and CNI XII, p. 369, 107.

The same type was struck in 1635 in two varieties. In one there is no date on the obverse but 1635 on the reverse (CNI pp. 366-7, 79 & 80). In the other the 1635 date is on the obverse but there is no date on the reverse (CNI p. 367, 81). No piastres were struck in 1636 and 1637. When the piastre in figure 5 was struck in 1638 with the date on the obverse, for some unknown reason—surely not just carelessness—they used, or copied, the reverse die with the 1635 date, not the one without date.

This was apparently not the first time this happened at the Florence mint. Indeed, the practice seems to have begun under Ferdinando II’s predecessor, Cosimo II (1609-21). Under his rule there are piastres with 1610 on the obverse and 1609 on the reverse (Dav. 4189, CNI XII, p. 343, 31 & 32), a testone with 1609 on the obverse and 1610 on the reverse (CNI p. 343, 35) and a lira with 1609 on the obverse and 1610 on the reverse (CNI p. 344, 36 & p. 489, 36a). There is also a testone with 1610 on the obverse and 1611 on the reverse (CNI p. 346, 57).

Under Ferdinando II, apart from the coin in figure 5, there are piastres with 1624 on the obverse and 1623 on the reverse (Dav. 4199, CNI XII, p. 360, 29-32), with 1625 on the obverse and 1623 on the reverse (CNI p. 362, 41, 44 & 45), with 1625 on the

obverse and 1626 on the reverse (CNI p. 361-62, 40 & 43) and with 1633 on the obverse and 1630 on the reverse (Dav. 4201, CNI p. 366, 75).

Later on, there are piastres with 1645 on the obverse and 1642 on the reverse (Dav. 4202, CNI XII, p. 371, 122 & 123) and with 1649 on the obverse and 1642 on the reverse (CNI p. 372, 124.)

The practice continued under Ferdinando's successor, Cosimo III (1670-1723). Under his rule there are piastres with 1680 on the obverse and 1681 on the reverse (Dav. 4210, CNI XII, p. 394, 65 & 66).

The large number of these double dated coins in Florence seems to show a very casual attitude towards dates on the part of the mint authorities. I would be interested in any further information on the subject readers may have.

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Paduan Medal of Faustina the Younger Aureo y Calicó



Faustina the Younger. Bronze Medallion. (Cohen -, Gnechi -). Obv.: "FAVSTINA AVG • ANTONINI AVG • PII FIL" bust right, diademed and draped. Rev.: "S. C." six Vestals sacrificing at altar situated in front of hexastyle temple. 37.80 g. Paduan dies of XVI Century. (Aureo y Calicó, Subasta 15-December-2010, lot 37.)

NI

Coins of the *Nagas* of *Padmavati*
(Coins of a Mighty Group that has Totally Been Forgotten)
Dr. Johnson C. Philip, NI #2717

The field of numismatics is full of surprising stories, and the Naga (a people group) coins of Padmavati (Central India) are definitely one of them. This place has yielded hundreds of thousands of coins but it is hardly known to coin-lovers in India, let alone outside.

It is reported that one hoard from an earthen pot contained as many as 100,000 coins. Yet I have come across only one book on these coins so far, and even that book is a few decades old. So high is the ignorance about these coins that I myself did not know about them till about a year ago. As a result, even though in the last five years I visited places as close as 10 kilometers to Padmavati, to photograph places of historical and archaeological importance, I did not visit Padmavati—because I never knew about it.

Numismatics plays a significant role in bringing back forgotten history, but so little work has been done after a century of discovery that even today Naga in general, and Nagas of Padmavati in particular, are a forgotten people. Only rarely are their coins noticed by collectors even though hundreds of thousands have surfaced due to land erosion over a century.

History of the Nagas

It seems that Nagas were a group of Mongoloids who migrated to a number of places in North India around 1000 BC. Since they were non Aryans,¹ a tension between them and Aryan races developed in many places where they settled. It seems that the region today known as Kashmir was probably their original home after their entry in India from North-west, or that Kashmir was the place where they had their greatest concentration in the beginning of their settlement in North India. It also seems that some of them settled as far as Nagaland in the north-east of India and Andhra in south India, though their main areas of settlement remained in central India. Their influence reached beyond their area of settlement, because today even *Andhra* and *Kerala* (the southernmost state of India) have Naga temples.

The earliest Naga rulers seem to be *Bhuta Nandi* (or *Bhutinandi*), *Sisunandi* and *Yasonandi*. Some coins in the British Museum appear to originate from their reigns, but it seems they have been classified erroneously to other dynasties and further research is awaited for confirmation. Thus, a series of coins in the British Museum which are generally assigned to *Mathura* actually belong to Padmavati. It is also reported that in the British Museum there are coins of *Seshadata*, *Ramdata* and *Sisuchandradata*. The script of the Seshadata's coin seems to be the oldest and the coins in all probability belong to the first century BC. In the same series, there are coins of *Ramadata*. These coins of this dynasty are probably identical to *Sesha-Naga*, *Ram-chandra* and *Sisu Nandi*. The following is a tentative chronology which needs

¹ Aryan refers to the language, and by extension native speakers of the language, inherited from eastern ancient Persia, today including Iran and parts of India.

further research for confirmation.

- 1) *Sesha Naga* 110-90 BC
- 2) *Bhugin* 90-80 BC
- 3) *Ramachandra* 80-50 BC
- 4) *Dharma Varman* 50-40 BC
- 5) *Vangara* 40-31 BC

The above ruled at *Vidisha* before the decline of the *Sunga* race. The following rulers came to power after the *Satavahanas* destroyed *Sunga* rulers:

- 6) *Bhuta Nandi* 20-10 BC
- 7) *Shishu Nandi* 10 BC- AD 25
- 8) *Yash Nandi* 25 BC (to around the year AD 1)

There is plenty of evidence that the kings above ruled at *Padmavati* after the end of *Sungas* and that they consolidated themselves during this period. Immediately after them came the following rulers:

- 9) *Purushadata*
- 10) *Uttamdata*
- 11) *Kamadata*
- 12) *Bhavadata*
- 13) *Shiva Nandi* or *Shivadata* (c. AD 78)

The *Naga* kings from 9 to 13 are known from the inscriptions and coins but their exact order of succession is totally uncertain at present. In AD 78, *Shiva Nandi* or *Shivadata* was superseded by the *Kushanas* who circulated their coins in this region. However, eventually the *Nagas* of *Padmavati* regained power and there began the major period of their history in that place (today known as *Pawaya* or *Padam Pawaya*). Vast hoards of coins have been discovered from the period after *Shiva Nandi*, and they in turn have given the names of 11 kings, listed further down in this article.

Archeological History of the Later Nagas of Padmavati

Many places in India indicate continuous occupation since at least 2000 BC or earlier, and a Kingdom known as the *Nagas* of *Padmavati* is one of them. In spite of continuous occupation, now for at least four millennia, very few artifacts and inscriptions have survived due to the severity of the climate which gradually reduces sandstone structures into dust. Furthermore, land erosion and mud slides during floods have also wiped out habitation after habitation, very few of which have ever been discovered.

That there were densely populated townships in this region is deduced not because many of the original towns could be unearthed, but mainly due to inscriptions, religious, and numismatic evidence. Some inscriptions have been discovered, and also numerous references to the *Naga* kings and kingdoms are available in the ancient religious literature (*puranas*) of India. However, what came as a surprise around a century ago was the large number of coins people were able to pick up from eroded ground after each season of rain.

Coins of Nagas of Padmavati

Based upon Stone Age implements discovered, it is clear that the Gwalior region was inhabited from ancient times. There are references to this region and its people in Indian epics. For example, during the *Mahabhabharat* period Gwalior was hinted as a place situated between the *Surasena* and *Chedi janapadas*. There is also indication that *Kunti*, the mother of the *Pandavas*, was the daughter of *Kuntibhoj* who was the ruler of this region. During the *Mauryan* period this region came under their dominion.

The earliest documentary evidence about rulers available is that of the Naga kings of the Padmavati and *Narwar* region which are places only about 50 kilometers away from the present Gwalior city, and are inhabited today even two millennia after the original Naga rule. The Naga kings were powerful men and they ruled a wide region that extended up to *Vidisha* in the south and *Mathura* in the North.

For a short period the Naga region came under the dominion of the *Kushana* as indicated by a large number of gold and copper Kushana coins discovered from this region. However, by the third century AD the Nagas had united and pushed them out of this region to regain autonomy.

Very little inscription documentation is available from this period, but Naga coins have come to the rescue of numismatists and students. Almost all of them contain inscriptions on the periphery of the reverse. While no single coin depicts the complete inscription, because the flan is always smaller than the die, the number of Naga coins discovered is so numerous (hundreds of thousands) that piecing together names has become easy.

So far they have revealed the names of 11 rulers. In chronological sequence these are:

- 1) *Vrishabh Nag*
- 2) *Bhim Nag*
- 3) *Skand Nag*
- 4) *Vasu Nag*
- 5) *Brahaspati Nag*
- 6) *Vibhu Nag*
- 7) *Ravi Nag*
- 8) *Bhavan Nag*
- 9) *Prabhakar Nag*
- 10) *Dev Nag*
- 11) *Ganapati Nag*

The hundreds of thousands of coins discovered of Naga kings are all of copper, circular, and 1 centimeter or less in diameter. Naga coins of precious metals have not been discovered so far and we do not know if they ever issued coins made of gold or silver.

It seems that the Naga empire was overtaken by the Gupta kings. There is a pillar inscription at *Allahabad* that suggests that *Samudragupta* completely annihilated the Naga rule during the time of Ganapati Nag.

The Coins

The Padmavati region started yielding coins in the 1800s when rains started to erode the present high level of mud. Villagers started finding these coins each year after the rains, and soon some non-Indian numismatists started taking interest in these coins. Subsequently many collections have originated from this place.

The circular shape seems more an accident than planned because one can discern three to four corners in many of these coins. These are some of the smallest coins from North India, where the coinage tends to be of larger size than corresponding South Indian coinage.

The humped bull was a common theme, though it was not the only theme that one sees on these coins. Other themes include the sun, peacock, horse trident, and wheels with six and eight spokes. Illustrated below are six coins with the humped bull. I have considerably enlarged one of these coins (original size only 10 mm) so you can see the contours of the humped bull. The design shows only partially on most coins and one has to sort through dozens of coins to find one that can show the humped bull so clearly.



Conclusion

The Nagas of Padmavati were a powerful ruling family and their coins deserve more attention than what they have received so far. Most coins within India are now lying in obscure places in archaeological museums which are not easily available to students. A large number of these coins have also reportedly been shipped to sellers and collectors outside India. As a result, we need a team of dedicated numismatists to get some substantial publications on the Naga coins of Padmavati.

Two Unique Medallions of Flavius Julius Constans Numismatica Genevensis



337-350. Gold medallion of 3 solidi, Trèves (Trier), 342-343, 12.83 g.

Obv.: “FL IVL CONS-TANS P F AVG” diademed, draped and cuirassed bust of Constans to right. Rev.: “TRIVMFATOR OM-NIVM GENTIVM / TR” Constans in military dress standing left, holding in his right hand a globe surmounted by a Victory, in his left hand a spear; treading on a prisoner with his right foot, a second prisoner raising his arms in supplication. C. - ; RIC - ; Depeyrot - ; Gneecchi -.

Same specimen pedigreed to auctions sales of MM (November 1977), 300 and Leu 93 (May 2005), 141.

This medallion was struck to mark the second consulate of Constans in 342 and to commemorate his victories over the Franks in 341 and 342. It can be linked to the medallion of Paris that bears the legend “TRIVMFATOR GENTIVM BARBARARVM” (C. 111, RIC 146, 121; Gneecchi 11). Unique.



337-350. Silver medallion of 4 siliquae or 4 argenti, Aquilée (Aquileia), 340-350, 13.21g.

Obv.: “FL IVL CONS-TANS P F AVG” diademed, draped and cuirassed bust of Constans to right, the diadem composed alternately of gems and laurel leaves. Rev.: / “VICTORIAE - DD NN AVGG / *AQ” Victory seated right on cuirass inscribing “VOT / X / MVLT / XV” on a shield. C. 163 var. (heavy miliarenses); RIC 320, 50 (heavy miliarenses); Gnechi 25 (heavy miliarenses). This unique piece is like the heavy miliarenses coins mentioned. The engraver of the reverse die used wavy lines to represent Victory’s wing feathers and long parallel lines showing the folds of the garment which is reminiscent of the contemporary light miliarenses (RIC 321, 63). Unique.

From Numismatica Genevensis auction #6, Geneva, 30-November to 1-December, 2010; lots 201 (gold) and 203 (silver). Reprinted courtesy of Numismatica Genevensis. Images are not actual size.

NI

Coins Countermarked with Political Messages and Related Pieces

Gregory G. Brunk, NI #749

(Continued from September / October 2010 *NI Bulletin*)

Catalog: Part F (France: Pieces Ridiculing Napoleon III)

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— France —

Pieces Ridiculing Napoleon III (Part 2)

Prepared Sedan Stamps

Many SEDAN countermarks are made from prepared punches, but upon close inspection the various stamps are seen to be of slightly different size. They occasionally are curved or in italics, and also vary according to whether there is an accent mark over é in Sédan. This suggests there were many different issuers, and the countermarking of Napoleon III coins was a great fad.

The best guess is that many of the countermarked coins were stamped by silversmiths and jewelers in northeast France. They apparently were sold at slightly above their face value to locals as souvenirs of the German occupation since many of them eventually were spent and went back into circulation. It might be that a person would take a coin from his pocket, and hand it to a merchant who would countermark it for a small fee. Other coins may have been countermarked by politically active individuals and put back into circulation as a protest against the idea of empire.

SEDAN

Copper Coins

Five Centimes: 1853 (3), 1854 (6), 1861, 1863, 1864 (2), UK
Ten Centimes: 1853 (2), 1854 (4), 1855 (3), 1856, 1860, 1861
(2), 1863, 1864 (2), UK

Silver Coins

Fifty Centimes: 1864 (2), 1865, 1866 (2), 1867 (5), 1868,
1869, 1870 (2), UK (2)
Franc: 1866 (8), 1867 (9), 1868 (5), 1870, UK (5)
Two Francs: 1866 (5), 1867 (3), 1868 (3), 1869
Five Francs: 1868 (6), 1869 (4), 1870 (4), UK

Gold Coins

Ten Francs: 1856, 1865
Twenty Francs: 1854, 1856, 1859



Five Francs



Two Francs



Two Francs

Countermarks Made from Individual Letter Punches

A variety of words and phrases are stamped on the coins of Napoleon III and mock his legacy. These include:

CON (idiot)
UK (1)

GRE DIN (scoundrel)
Five Francs: UK (2)



Five Francs

Five Francs countermarked SEDAN, GRE DIN and LACHE.

LACHE (coward)

Ten Centimes: 1854

Five Francs: 1868

LASS A CHE (time to leave)

Ten Centimes: UK



Ten Centimes

NAPOLEON / A / SEDAN

Ten Centimes: 185X



Ten Centimes

MERDE (vulgar term for human or animal excrement)

UK (1)

METZ (Refers to the second major French defeat)

Five Francs of Napoleon: 1811



Five Francs

A countermarked 1811 Five Francs of Napoleon with SEDAN on the obverse and METZ on the reverse. This is the only non-Napoleon III coin currently known.

SALOP (whore)
Franc: UK

SEDAN

It sometimes is difficult to tell if a prepared SEDAN stamp was used because it is not hard to make a straight impression using individual letter stamps given a little practice.

Two Francs: UK
Five Francs: 1868 (2), 1870
Five Francs of Napoleon: 1811



Five Francs

SEDAN / 25000

The number 25,000 was the initial guess of French casualties.

Ten Centimes: 1856

SEDAN / INVASION

Franc: 1868 (2)



Franc



Franc

SEDAN LA HONTE 1870 (Sedan the shame of 1870)

Five Centimes: UK

TRAITRE (traitor)

Five Centimes: 1855

Franc: UK (2)

Five Francs: 1852, 1868 (2), 1869 UK



Five Francs



Five Francs

2. XBRE – 1870 (Date of the battle of Sedan)

Five Francs: UK

1852 / 1870 (These are the years of Napoleon III's reign as emperor.)

Five Francs: UK

1870

Bronze Ten Centimes: 1861, 1862, 1864

Silver Ten Centimes: UK

Five Francs: 1870



Ten Centimes

Napoleon III as the Pope

A number of engraved coins show Napoleon III in various papal vestments, and refer to his frequent interventions in Papal affairs. More specifically, some writers say these engraved coins refer to the Nov. 3, 1867, Battle of Mentana. There Papal and French troops with their new chassepot rifles defeated Garibaldi's volunteers, who

were trying to capture the city of Rome. Afterwards the French maintained a garrison in Civitavecchia to protect the Pope and the Papal States.



Ten centimes of Napoleon III portraying him as the Pope

Withdrawal of French Troops from Rome

Until 1870 the Papal States were not part of the Italian nation. During the 1860s Napoleon III stationed French troops in Rome to protect the Pope and his territories, but they were withdrawn in August of 1870 because of the Franco-Prussian War. By the end of the year the Papal States had been annexed by Vittorio Emanuele II, and all that remained of the Pope's once extensive territories was the Vatican City. French Catholic resentment against Napoleon III is said to be reflected by this crucifix countermark and sometimes by a hole punched in the emperor's head.

Crucifix in Oval

Ten Centimes: 1856

Five Francs: 1867



Ten Centimes



Five Francs

NI

Médaille de Ste. Hélène
Herman Blanton, NI #LM115

The *Médaille de Ste. Hélène* (the Medal of Saint Helena) is a famous medal distributed to veterans who served in the French armies of the Revolution and Empire. It is a handsome medal and is sometimes available in the market.



Obv.: Bust of Emperor Napoleon I right "NAPOLÉON I EMPEREUR" with the 'anchor' mark of designer, Albert-Désiré Barre, located beneath bust. Rev.: "* CAMPAGNES DE 1792 A 1815" around and in center on 9 lines "A SES COMPAGNONS DE GLOIRE SA DERNIERE PENSEE STE. HELENE 5 MAI 1821" (Campaigns from 1792 to 1815—To His Companions of Glory, His Final Thought, 5 May 1821). Bronze, 31 mm wide, 50 mm high not including ribbon (which is missing from this specimen). Ribbon 37mm wide, green with edge and five stripes in red.

The origin of this medal has a lot to do with Napoleon III's efforts to legitimize his reign. With this medal he was trying to link the Second Empire to the First Empire. By awarding the medal to surviving soldiers of the Revolutionary and Imperial wars he capitalized on the public's memory of and fascination with Napoleon Bonaparte.

During the French Revolution the rights of the nobility were eliminated but they were allowed to keep their titles. As emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte began granting noble titles again, albeit the titles did not come with privileges. This was a method of rewarding those faithful to him. Bonaparte also instituted the Legion of Honor in 1802 and to this day remains the highest award in France. The Legion of Honor recognizes merit regardless of class or lineage.

Napoleon III was a nephew of Bonaparte through Napoleon's brother Louis who married Josephine's daughter (Napoleon's stepdaughter). He was elected president of the Second Republic in 1848, became dictator in 1851 and emperor of the Second Empire in 1852. While clearly elevating himself he tried to legitimize his reign by connecting the Second Empire to the First (Bonaparte's) Empire. In 1852, as president, Louis Napoleon declared August 15—Napoleon Bonaparte's birthday—would be celebrated as France's national day. He also awarded medals, including the Legion of Honor, to gain public support and later he authorized and awarded the Médaille de Ste. Hélène. Ostensibly the Médaille de Ste. Hélène was to recognize war veterans, but consider that 42 years had transpired since the end of the wars and 65 years from the beginning.¹

Justification for the medal

While Napoleon I was living in exile on the island of St Helena, near the end of his life he wrote successive versions of his last will and testament. In one of these he willed a sum of money to the officers and men who served between 1792 and 1815.

This day April 15, 1821, at Longwood House upon the island of St. Helena.
This is my last will and testament.

Section III, Item 2

I leave my private estate partly to the officers and men of the French army who fought from 1792 to 1815 for the glory and the independence of the nation; the other half is to go to the towns and countryside of Alsace, Lorraine, Franche-Comté, Burgundy, the Isle of France, Champagne, Forez, Dauphiné, which have all suffered on the occasion of one or the other invasion. One million is to go to the town of Brienne, and one to the town of Méry.

I nominate Count Montholon, Count Bertrand and Marchand, the executors.

(closing) This testament, written entirely in my own hand, is signed and sealed with my seal.
Napoleon²

On May 5, 1821 his last words before expiring into eternity were, "*France, armée, tête d'armée, Joséphine*" (France, army, head of the army, Joséphine).³

Napoleon's will and dying words were used to justify the production and distribution of the Médaille de Ste. Hélène.

The medal was authorized on 12 August 1857 by Napoleon III, Emperor of the French. The image below is from Law Bulletin 535.⁴ English translation follows.

N° 4893. — DÉCRET IMPÉRIAL qui accorde une Médaille commémorative à tous les Militaires français et étrangers des Armées de terre et de mer qui ont combattu sous les drapeaux de la France de 1792 à 1815.

Du 12 Août 1857.

NAPOLÉON, par la grâce de Dieu et la volonté nationale, EMPEREUR DES FRANÇAIS, à tous présents et à venir, SALUT.

Voulant honorer par une distinction spéciale les militaires qui ont combattu sous les drapeaux de la France, dans les grandes guerres de 1792 à 1815,

AVONS DÉCRÉTÉ et DÉCRÉTONS ce qui suit :

ART. 1^{er}. Une médaille commémorative est donnée à tous les militaires français et étrangers des armées de terre et de mer qui ont combattu sous nos drapeaux de 1792 à 1815.

Cette médaille sera en bronze et portera, d'un côté, l'effigie de l'Empereur; de l'autre, pour légende : Campagnes de 1792 à 1815. — A ses compagnons de gloire, sa dernière pensée, 5 mai 1821.

Elle sera portée à la boutonnière suspendue par un ruban vert et rouge.

2. Notre ministre d'état et le grand chancelier de notre ordre impérial de la Légion d'honneur sont chargés, chacun en ce qui le concerne, de l'exécution du présent décret.

Fait au palais de Saint-Cloud, le 12 Août 1857.

Signé NAPOLÉON.

Par l'Empereur :

Le Ministre d'état,

Signé ACHILLE FOULD,

No. 4893. —Imperial decree granting one commemorative medal to all French and Foreign military figures from the Army and Navy that fought under the French flag between 1792 and 1815.

From August 12th, 1857

NAPOLEON, by the grace of God and the will of the Nation, Emperor of the French, to all those present and future, salutations.

Wanting to honor with special distinction all military men who fought under the French flag in the great wars from 1792 to 1815,
Have decreed and decree as follows:

Art. 1. One commemorative medal be given to all French and foreign military figures from the Army and Navy that fought under our flag from 1792 to 1815.

This medal will be in bronze and will carry on one side, the effigy of the Emperor, and on the other, as legend: *Campaigns from 1792 to 1815.—To his companions of glory, his final thought, 5 May 1821.*

It shall be worn suspended at the buttonhole (lapel) by a green and red ribbon.

2. Our minister of the state and the Grand Chancellor of our Imperial Order of the Legion of Honor are charged, as each is concerned, with the execution of the present decree.

Decreed at the palace of Saint-Cloud, 12th August 1857.

Signed NAPOLEON.

By the Emperor:
The minister of state,
Signed Achille Fould

If you compare the imperial decree with the medals produced you will notice that “Ste. Helene” in the medal inscription is not in the decree. So it must have been decided later to add it. Not only does the medal have the “Ste. Helene” inscription but the accompanying certificate that was awarded to the recipient has it.

According to the website <http://www.france-phaleristique.com/stehelen.htm> there were three smaller versions made for sale to the public; 33 mm, 20 mm and 16 mm high. The reverse inscription on three lines “Ste-HÉLÈNE 5 MAI 1821.”

¹ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Saint-Napoleon: celebrations of sovereignty in nineteenth-century France*. (Harvard University Press, 2004), 82-83.

² Jean-Pierre Babelon and Suzanne D’Huart, trans. Alex de Jonge, *Napoleon’s Last Will and Testament, A facsimile edition of the original document, together with its codicils, appended inventories, letters and instructions, preserved in the French National Archives*. (London: Paddington Press, 1977; New York distributor, Grosset & Dunlap), 44.

³ Ibid., 26.

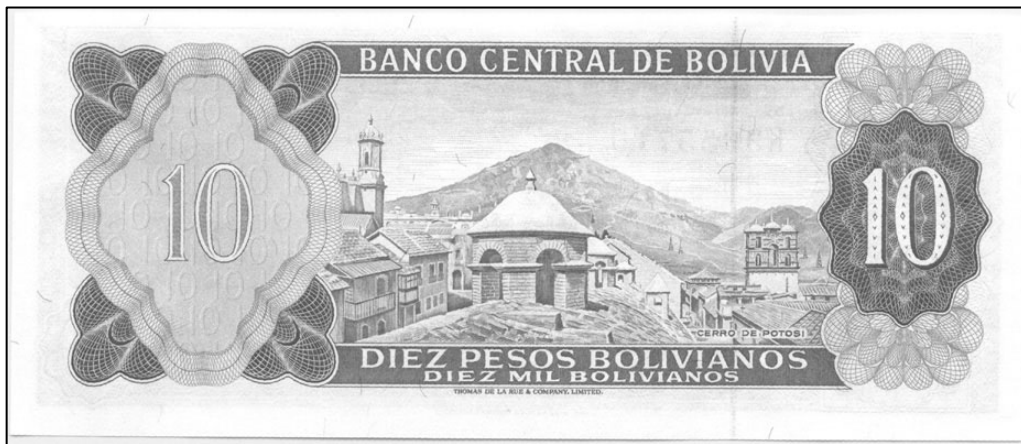
⁴ *Bulletin Des Lois De L’empire Français. Xie Série. Règre de Napoléon III, Empereur des Français. Deuxième Semestre De 1857, Contenant Les Lois Et Décrets D’intérêt Public Et Général Publiés Depuis Le 1st Juillet Jusqu’au 31 Décembre Inclusivement. Tome Dixième. (Bulletin) Nos 517 À 574.* (Paris Impromerie Impériale, January 1858), No. 4893, 653-54.

Bolivia's Unfortunate Presidents

Howard Ford, NI #LM90

Many presidents of Bolivia never lost a bid for a second term. They were assassinated too soon after first becoming president. The above statement is exaggerated, of course; but it is true that being the chief of state of Bolivia frequently put men in a very dangerous position. At least six have been assassinated. A good many more had to flee into exile to avoid worse consequences.

Immediately below, we show both a banknote and a gold medal of Colonel German ("Hehrmann") Busch Becerra, who was Bolivia's president from 1937 to 1939.



1952, 14 grams gold, 26 mm diameter

The gold shows his bust facing left, with the Bolivian Shield on the reverse. The front side of the Central Bank of Bolivia 10 Pesos Bolivianos shows Busch in military uniform; the back shows the fabled Mt. Potosí, which has dominated the economy of the country for 450 years, as first the Spaniards took out immense fortunes in silver before 1800 and then later Bolivians took out immense fortunes in tin, enough to make tin the country's major export for many years (http://www.geocities.com/gardner_berg/bolivia2.html).

Busch was a war hero in a war that Bolivia lost, the Chaco War with Paraguay, in which Bolivia's German-trained troops were handled easily by Paraguay's French-trained army. Nonetheless, he remained influential enough to lead three different coups against three different Bolivian presidents, including one that he had personally installed as president, his close associate Colonel David Toro. Finally, he had himself elected president. He restored the Constitution, but then declared himself dictator. Soon after, he died of a gunshot wound to the head. Some argue that he committed suicide, but since he died so soon after having made himself dictator, it is quite easy to believe the argument that he was a murder victim (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germ%C3%A1n_Busch).

Busch was believed to be pro-Nazi in his sympathies, but he said no to this charge. However, he had given sanctuary to Ernst Roehm for two years after that Nazi had quarreled with Adolf Hitler.

One of the presidents who followed soon after Busch, 1943-1946, was Colonel Gualberto Villaroel Lopez, a reformist who believed in many of the same ideas as Busch. The Roosevelt administration was slow in recognizing Villaroel's government because it contained a good many Nazi sympathizers. He finally removed these men from their positions, and Washington then gave official recognition to Villaroel. His period in office was a deadly one. He executed several political enemies, then had their corpses thrown off a cliff. He was himself brutally murdered.

One night in 1946 in La Paz, a large, angry and very violent mob gathered in the Plaza Murillo, outside the presidential office in the *Palacio Quemado*. Villaroel quickly wrote out his resignation; but the mob broke in, murdered Villaroel, threw his body off the balcony onto the street below, where others in the mob grabbed the already dead Villaroel and hanged him from a lamppost. The attack of Villaroel may have been caused in large part by economic problems resulting from the falling price of tin on world markets. However, Bolivia's people were split so violently on many political issues that it would have been virtually impossible for any president to compromise enough to reconcile the extremist factions to his government.

Once again, we can show both a banknote and a gold medal for a Bolivian leader. The gold shows Villaroel facing left. He is in military uniform. The Shield of Bolivia is on the reverse. The paper is a 5 Pesos Bolivianos note, with Villaroel's portrait at the right, facing forward. The back shows an oil refinery, another vital element in the economy. David Toro had nationalized the Standard Oil Company's properties in 1937, at least partially a reaction to the fact that Standard Oil officers had advised Bolivia to wage the ill-advised Chaco War. As late as 2007, there was still a

privatized Gualberto Villaroel Refinery in the country; then it was also nationalized (<http://socialistworld.net/eng/2007/06/11 bolivia.html>).



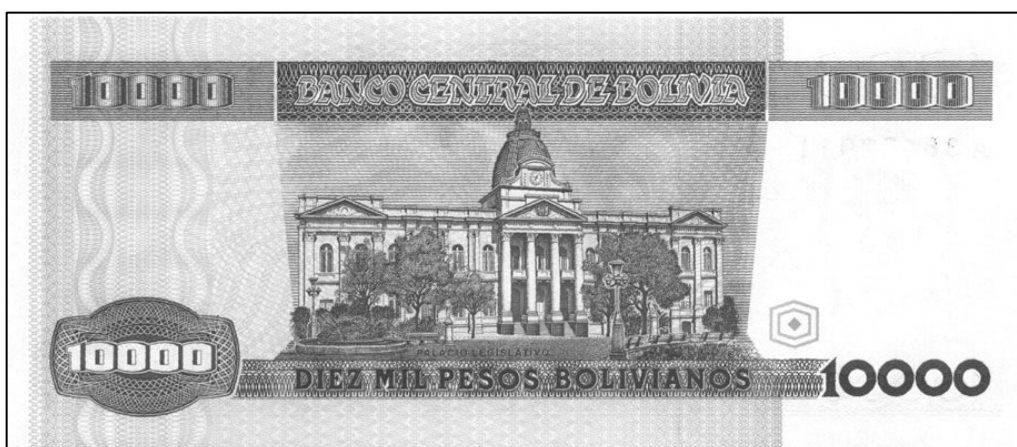
1952, 35 grams gold, 35 mm diameter

Why would Bolivia mint commemorative gold and print currency showing portraits of military men that many Bolivians had despised? The medals are dated 1952, not very long at all after the slaughter of Villaroel and not terribly long after Busch's demise. The reason for the issues is that 1952 was the year in which the National Revolution occurred. The party that came to power then shared the political ideologies of the two dead ex-presidents: they considered Colonel Busch and Colonel Villaroel their own. The complete commemorative set of four medals contains only two portraits, those of Busch Becerra, 14 grams of gold, and Villaroel Lopez, 35

grams. The other two pieces show a Bolivian Indian, 3.5 grams, and a Mine Worker, 7 grams. For several years the four issues were accepted as coins, but now the major coin catalogs have dropped them out and they are considered medallic issues.

The currency belongs to the first series of 1962 issues from the Central Bank in La Paz, and Busch and Villaroel are prominent. Among the other portraits are those of the nineteenth century revolutionary heroes, Diego Murillo, José de Sucre and the Liberator, Simón Bolívar. Busch and Villaroel are in good company. However, Busch does not appear on any later notes. Villaroel appears on the 50,000 PB notes of 1984. He also appears on an undated 50,000 PB note known to have been printed in 1987. This note is interesting because the value was later reduced by an overprint on the reverse to 5 Centavos after a highly inflationary period in Bolivia, when notes with values as high as 5,000,000 and 10,000,000 PB were issued.

The final piece of currency below shows the portrait of Andres de Santa Cruz, president of Perú in 1827 and Bolivia from 1829 to 1839. He was also Supreme Protector of the Perú-Bolivia Confederation from 1836-39. These are indeed high positions for a man who began his career in the Spanish Army fighting against the patriot cause. He switched sides after having been captured by José de San Martín, the great Argentine leader.



The note is a 1987 ND Provisional Issue from 1987 with the portrait at the right. A high denomination note, it was later reduced to 1 Centavo by an overprint on the back. The back shows the Congress Building in the Plaza Murillo, named after the Diego Murillo mentioned earlier.

This Bolivian president seemed a very likely candidate for assassination because he championed the idea that Bolivia and Perú should be one country. This issue was the cause of much angry and violent debate, which aroused murderous emotions. Many men wanted a separate Perú because then they could profit more greatly from the immense mineral wealth of the country. The president escaped assassination, but he had to spend the final years of his life in exile. He fled first to Ecuador, from which he returned to fight again for the causes he believed in. Losing a major battle, he fled again, first to Argentina, then to Versailles in France. He died in 1865 in France. A century later, Bolivia asked France to return his body to Bolivia, where it was reburied with great ceremony beside the Presidential Palace in La Paz (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9s_ob_Santa_Cruz).

NI

Maximilian and Mary Wedding Medal

Jean Elsen & ses Fils, NI #2696



Holy Roman Empire, AR Gold Medal, 1477

Wedding of Archduke Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy. Obv.: “• MAXIMIL • • R • B • MARI • D • BVRG • / 1477” the husband, standing facing wife Marie who is placing her shield under the protection of Maximilian. Rev.: “IN • GODTS • HANT • HABEN • WIER • ES • GESTALT” grand shield decorated with Maximilian, under the Archduke crown. Ref.: Van Miers, I, 140, 1. 44.16 g. Diameter 50 mm. Fine old casting. (Elsen Auction 99, 28 March 2009, Lot 2952.)

NI

Straps for Cash
Daniel Frank Sedwick, NI #2704
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When you look at Mexican cobs of the 1600s and 1700s, you may wonder how cob planchets were made, given their sometimes crazy shapes. We know from contemporary documents that an innovation at the end of the 1500s—in effect the invention of cobs—greatly sped up the coining process, specifically the planchet preparation. But how was this done? A logical starting place is the popular phrase *cabo de barra* (“end of the bar”), which some experts think is the origin of the word “cob,” pronounced exactly the same as the first syllable of the word *cabo*. Interestingly, older Spanish numismatic dictionaries specify *cabo de barra* as the end-pieces (the oddest shapes) from the Mexican mint.¹ But this makes no sense if the planchets were cross-cut slices of thick, salami-like ingots or big rectangular loaves like the bullion bars we see from shipwrecks. Instead you have to think of the “bar” as a flat, horizontal “strap,” something the Spanish colonial mint workers referred to as a *riel* (akin to the word “rail,” as in railroad).²

So what did a riel look like? Until recently we did not know of any surviving examples; but in our Treasure Auction #6 we noticed something interesting in lot #1972, which included a 1960s photo of a display in the Real Eight Company’s museum in Satellite Beach, Florida, with the label HOW “COB” COINS WERE MADE (see image, taken out of focus through the glass display). In the display were several Mexican cob 8 reales (recovered by Real



Eight from the 1715 Fleet) lined up so their straight edges met. Evidently eight of these coins together made a flat, 1” to 2” wide ingot with undulating sides; a silver strap! At the top of the same display was an uncut strap of silver. Was it an original riel, salvaged from one of the wrecks? A quick call to original Real Eight member Lou Ullian confirmed that “strap” was the real deal, although its current whereabouts

¹ See *Diccionario de la lengua castellana* by Melchor Manuel Nuñez de Taboada (Paris, 1822) and *Diccionario enciclopédico-mejicano del idioma española*, Volume 1, by Emiliano Busto (Mexico City, 1883), and note that the second book alternately refers to *cabo de barra* as the last and presumably short payment against a debt.

² See *Arte de ensayar oro, y plata, con breves reglas para la theorica, y la practica, en el qual se explica tambien el oficio de ensayador, y mareador mayor de los reynos; el de los fieles contrastes de oro, y plata; el de los marcadores de plata, y tocadores de oro; y el de los contrastes amotacenes, segun las leyes de estos reynos* by Bernardo Muñoz de Amador (Madrid, 1755), which mentions using a compass to mark cut points on the riel, along with complicated mathematical formulas. Also illuminating is *Breve relacion del ensaye de plata y oro* by Mexican mint assayer Geronimo Bezerra (Mexico City, 1671, available in a 2004 digital edition by Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes). Rieles were also made in gold: Records for the Bogotá, Colombia, mint state that an amount of “oro en rieles” was brought to the mint by the merchant Martín de Verganzo y Gamboa for making gold cobs in 1627

are unknown, and that it was rough on the bottom and smooth on the top, just as you would expect if the silver was simply poured onto a flat surface and left to spread out and cool naturally. In retrospect it is hard to believe that such a numismatically significant artifact received little or no attention, but at that time crude cobs and how they were made were of little interest to serious coin collectors.

The rest of the story is no mystery (see second footnote). The planchet makers at the mint measured out 216 grams (8 x 27) of molten silver at the proper fineness and temperature (not too hot or it would make a flat pool) and poured it into a snake-like line, which flattened out naturally as it cooled. Next, he found the center point of the strap by balancing it, and then he cut perpendicularly at the center of balance, creating two halves of equal weight, to each of which he applied the same principle two more times to arrive at eight coins of more or less equal weight. If he overcut or undercut by a little bit, so be it—it had to average out to 27 grams per coin since the total weight of the strap was proper for eight coins. To make straps for smaller denominations, the temperature of the silver would be adjusted higher for thinner straps and therefore thinner coins (and of course less weight to start with).

What happened next explains the sloping sides and blunted points that we see on Mexican cobs. Unlike natural sides from a strap, cut sides on each coin caused them to harden faster and crack, unless they were hammered down, also making those edges less sharp. A similar principle was applied to the all-too-common points left by the shears at the ends of a cut. Sharp edges and points, after all, could be dangerous to handle and impossible to bag and transport in quantity. It was an expedient method, albeit without regard to aesthetics.

The coins we see today are clear examples of these methods. Not only do these cobs have random shapes with just one or two straight, cut, hammered-down sides, they also come in varying weights around a more or less proper average of 27 grams to the 8 reales. Furthermore, some specimens demonstrate very strange shapes (particularly what we can assume to be the end pieces) and even have “bubble holes” that are simply where the cooling silver in the ingot hit a snag and flowed around an air pocket.

We must emphasize that this method only applies to Mexican cobs from the early 1600s to early 1700s. The earlier coins and those from other mints are much more round, which means either there was a different method for making those blanks or the blanks were simply (but laboriously) trimmed down to more circular shapes. And we are not counting “Royals” and “Hearts” and other intentional shapes, which were specially prepared by hand and not subject to batch preparation.

The next time you see odd-shaped Mexican cobs, take a closer look at the edges and consider how they were cut from straps, and then perhaps their shapes will not seem so strange after all.

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NI

NI Educational Programs

The Numismatics International Education Program Moderator, Howard A. Daniel III, will be manning a club table for NI (and IBNS, NBS & PCF) at the two shows detailed below. There will be about 400 packets of world coins from NI (and banknotes from IBNS) to be given to young and new numismatists in the name of NI. References will also be given to scout counselors to assist with those scouts working on their numismatic merit badge.

The NI club table can be designated as a meeting place for NI members, and members can also volunteer to staff the table so Howard can look around the bourse and attend other meetings. Howard is looking forward to meeting new and old NI members.

Florida United Numismatists (FUN) Show: January 6-9, 2011 Tampa Convention Center, 333 South Franklin Street, Tampa, Florida 33602

There will be an NI meeting at 11 a.m. on Saturday, January 8, in a Meeting Room 7. All NI members should bring one piece from their collection or one bought on the bourse to describe at the beginning of the meeting. This meeting will be combined with IBNS, and the last part of the meeting will be an MPC (Military Payment Certificate) Mini-Fest. This is a gathering of people interested in military monies of all types and varieties. The room is reserved for two hours in case we run overtime.

Howard will also be the moderator of the meeting and will make a presentation of interest to both NI and IBNS members. Colonel Bill Myers will also make a presentation during the MPC Mini-Fest part of the meeting. Military Fest Certificates (MFC) are “paid” to all attendees, to include NI and IBNS members. Whether or not you collect military financial instruments, you will enjoy this event.

American Numismatic Assoc. (ANA) National Money Show: March 17-19, 2011 Sacramento Convention Center, 1400 J. Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

There will be an NI meeting at Noon on Saturday, March 19, in a meeting room to be announced. All NI members should bring one piece from their collection or one bought on the bourse to describe at the beginning of the meeting. Howard will be the moderator of the meeting and will make a presentation unless another NI member volunteers to make one.

If an attendee comes 30 minutes early to the NI meeting, he or she will be also attending an MPC Mini-Fest during the last 15-20 minutes of the IBNS meeting that starts at 11 a.m. in the same room. This is a gathering of people interested in military monies of all types and varieties. Colonel Bill Myers will make a short presentation. Military Fest Certificates (MFC) are “paid” to all attendees, to include NI and IBNS members. Whether or not you collect military financial instruments, you will enjoy this event.